

Message Text

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67

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02

TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01

DRC-01 /188 W

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R 130300Z NOV 73

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1873

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PERTH

C O N F I D E N T I A L MELBOURNE 1169

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN MINISTER OF LABOR CONVENES"INDUSTRIAL
PEACE CONFERENCE"

1. ALL MEDIA ON NOVEMBER 13 REPORT ANNOUNCEMENT BY MINISTER
OF LABOR CAMERON THAT HE IS CONVENING A TWO-DAY "INDUSTRIAL
PEACE CONFERENCE" TO BE HELD IN CANBERRA STARTING DECEMBER 10.
ALL MANPOWER ELEMENTS OF THE ECONOMY EXCEPT STATE GOVERNMENTS
WILL BE INVITED.

2. FOLLOWING A PROPOSAL ORIGINALLY MADE BY R. HAMER, STATE
PREMIER OF VICTORIA, A WEEK AGO AND ORIGINALLY REJECTED BY
CAMERON, MINISTER'S PROPOSED AGENDA INCLUDES NEW AGENCIES FOR
MEDIATION AND VOLUNTARY ARBITRATION INDEPENDENT OF EXISTING
STATUTORY BODIES; NEW STATUS FOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING; LONG
TERM AGREEMENTS UP TO THREE YEARS DURATION; NEW BINDING
AUTHORITY TO ENSURE THAT AGREEMENTS WILL BE HONORED BY THE
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PARTIES; NEW STATE AND NATIONAL BODIES COLLATERAL TO EXISTING

AGENCIES WITH POWERS TO PREVENT AND SETTLE INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES; REPEAL OF PENALTIES FOR STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS IN VIOLATION OF ARBITRATION DECISIONS (THIS FEATURE TO BE TRIED FOR A TRIAL PERIOD OF ONE YEAR, RENEWABLE BY PARLIAMENT); REINSTITUTION OF AUTOMATIC BASIC WAGE ADJUSTMENT, BASED ON COST OF LIVING INDEX; MACHINERY TO ELIMINATE DEMARCATION DISPUTES; WIDENING OF FEDERAL JURISDICTION BY AMENDMENT OF REGISTRATION PROCEDURES; ESTABLISHMENT OF TRIPARTITE MISSIONS TO INVESTIGATE SOLUTIONS TO MANPOWER PROBLEMS IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

3. THESE PROBLEMS ARE A HODGE-PODGE OF PROJECTS NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE MINISTRY OF LABOR WHICH ARE IN VARIOUS STAGES OF COMPLETION. THE PROPOSALS ALSO INCLUDE SEVERAL WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN REJECTED BY THE SENATE IN ITS CONSIDERATION OF CAMERON'S PROPOSED REFORMS OF INDUSTRIAL LEGISLATION.

4. MINISTER' INITIATIVE HAS BEEN WIDELY WELCOMED BY PUBLIC AS EVIDENCED IN EDITORIAL COMMENT SO FAR AVAILABLE.

5. SINCE CAMERON MADE HIS PROPOSALS DURING NOVEMBER 12 SESSION OF PARLIAMENT, AND SINCE HE MADE ANNOUNCEMENT IN POLITICAL CONTEXT, REACTION FROM OPPOSITION PARTIES EXPECTEDLY HAS BEEN CRITICAL. BUT SO FAR, NO ONE HAS REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE.

6. COMMENT: POLITICAL COLORATION GIVEN BY MINISTER IN HIS ANNOUNCEMENT IS UNFORTUNATE. MANPOWER PROBLEMS IN AUSTRALIA HAVE BEEN PERHAPS NEEDLESSLY COMPLICATED BY FAILURE OF ALL PARTIES CONCERNED TO APPROACH PROBLEM ON BASIS OF NATIONAL UNITY. LABATT HAS OVER PAST THREE MONTHS, AT OPPORTUNE MOMENTS IN APPROPRIATE QUARTERS, RELATED U.S. MANPOWER EXPERIENCE, STARTING WITH HISTORY OF 1961 PUERTO RICAN-BASED "MIDDLE MANAGEMENT MANPOWER CONFERENCE" WHICH PRECEDED ENACTMENT OF MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING ACT OF 1962. MUCH INTEREST IN U.S. EXPERIENCE WAS SHOWN IN ACADEMIC, MANAGEMENT, TRADE UNION AND GOVERNMENT CIRCLES. LABATT HAS DRAWN ON SUCH DOCUMENTS AS TEMPLE UNIVERSITY PUBLICATION "MANPOWER POLICY AND PERSPECTIVES", MANPOWER REPORTS OF THE PRESIDENT FOR VARIOUS YEARS, AND THE FORTUITOUS PRESENCE AND EXPERIENCE OF ROBERT HALL, SENIOR US DOL EMPLOYEE PRESENTLY EMPLOYED AS CONSULTANT TO AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

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POINT STRESSED WAS THAT SUCCESSFUL MANPOWER CONFERENCE NOT BE HELD IN CRISIS SITUATION; SINCE CAMERON'S PROPOSAL VIOLATES THIS TENENT, ITS CHANCES FOR SUCCESS ARE TO THAT EXTENT DIMINISHED. GRANTED THAT PRESENT SITUATION HAS REACHED CRISIS PROPORTIONS, POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS SHOULD HAVE BEEN PUT ASIDE IN ORDER TO PERMIT INCLUSION OF STATE GOVERNMENTS IN LIST OF PARTICIPANTS, AS THEY ARE AMONG AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST EMPLOYERS AND ARE BEING ASKED TO SURRENDER A DEGREE OF SOVEREIGNTY OVER

THEIR AFFAIRS. LABATT SPECULATES PRESS COMMENT, THAT CAMERON IS CALLING CONFERENCE AS A WAY TO BY-PASS SENATE INTERFERENCE IN HIS PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL REFORMS, IS PROBABLY CORRECT. OPPOSITION LIBERAL LEADER SNEDDEN, IN HIS PUBLISHED COMMENT ON CAMERON PROPOSAL, CONTINUES TO DISPLAY INEPT AND IRRELEVANT APPROACH TO NATIONAL PROBLEMS WHICH CONTRIBUTES LARGELY TO CURRENT LETHARGY FOR HIM WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY. SO FAR NO REALLY STATESMANLIKE STATEMENT CONCERNING PROPOSED CONFERENCE HAS ISSUED FROM OPPOSITION RANKS.
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